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Verses

Grace S. Wells



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V E R S E S

by

GRACE S. WELLS



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DEDICATED

To those friends of the author, who knew
how *true* she was—

“To the kindred points of Heaven and
Home,” of this the verses in this little volume
are but imperfect records—

Through these, *She*, having passed within
the *veil*, still speaks to them!

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IN MEMORIAM

Those who knew Mrs. Grace Sherman Wells, however slightly, cannot but be saddened by the announcement of her death, which occurred in Evanston, November 22, 1900, after an illness of two days only. Those who knew her closely, discerning the strength and sweetness of her character, must in her passing away feel a sense of personal loss and bereavement; must feel this life poorer and smaller now that, to outward seeming, she has no part in it.

For several years previous to coming to Evanston, Mrs. Wells was a resident of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. It was during these years that she won for herself a wide and favorable recognition as a writer of poetry. Though of late her pen has been laid aside, it is doubtless true that many a scrap-book in the land holds some of her thoughtful verse among its treasures, and in many a memory lingers the music of some of her sweet songs.

Her poems were marked by strong, helpful thought, poetic fancy, and noble expression. They were vital with that sincerity which was the key-note of all her thoughts and deeds.

She possessed fine social gifts, she was by nature warm, responsive, genuine. Hers was the culture that involved the spiritual as well as the intellectual life. She had a broad sympathy and a generous hand, with a clear perception of her duty to that humanity whose hurts and sorrows she felt in her own heart.

The following poem, written by her, tells more plainly than could any other words what manner of soul was hers:

INSEPARABLE

Something forbids me live my life alone,
The fate which is not mine I still must share;
Yet partly mine all woes which I have known,
And no unclouded joy I call my own,
While some must meet despair.

Should it be mine on summer seas to sail —
Should tranquil breezes still my vessel bear —
For my heart's-ease this would not quite avail,
If still I knew that somewhere ocean's gale
Had brought one ship despair.

If worshipped Love with highest gift should come —
If it were mine a thornless crown to wear —
I would remember what love brings to some;
Nor quite forget the way it might have come,
And brought my soul despair.

Should wealth and fame my path through life adorn,
And I no darker ways be called to dare,
I would through others feel the proud world's scorn,
And lo, a cloud would dim my sunlit morn —
A shadow of despair.

And had my spirit reached the realm of bliss,
To know that some might never enter there,
Not heaven's gates could bar out woe like this —
But highest joy I should forever miss,
Should one soul meet despair.

CARLOTTA PERRY.

November 25, 1900.

VERSES

HILDA IN ROME

Oh, dreary streets of hot and dusty Rome !
Oh, dismal churches, doleful sepulchers,
To-day within my darkened spirit stirs
The exile's pain, the pilgrim's prayer for home !

This crumbly grandeur has no power to bless;
In breezes blown across the windy sea,
The fragrant past comes freshly back to me;
My spirit pines for native homeliness, —

For sights familiar, faces I have known,
The sober week and solemn Sabbath day,
The snowy church where I was wont to pray,
Above whose roof the grand old elms had grown.

I wander through the galleries of art,
While with me walks the demon Weariness.
So plausible, but oh so pitiless,
His magic strikes all marvels from the heart.

Yet no, not all; his icy touch he stays
The Dutch conjuror's cunning tricks to spare,
And strives by subtile sophistries, to snare
The weakened soul to utter words of praise.

Oh Mephistopheles of art! restore
The vanished splendor, and unveil to me
Through self-surrender and simplicity,
The master's mighty miracles once more.

Or lead me through the sickly summer breeze
Where old St. Peter's lifts its lofty dome,
Where weary feet find refuge, rest, and home,
And burdens fall when sinners bend the knees.

Within its space there reigns a solemn peace;
No outer tumult stirs the silent air;
New England's daughter, I may enter there
And from my sorrow win a brief release;

May feel within the silent sympathy
Of human souls, forgetful of their creed;
And he who knows all nature and all need
May send the peace that passeth thought to me.

And thou, beloved, the thought of thee will bring
The deeper insight, that enlarges trust,
Till vital germs beneath this ancient dust
Shall blow once more in glories of the Spring.

UNDERTONES

I clasped a rose to my aching breast,
 Lo! hidden thorns my eager fingers tore;
 Oh! why, I sighed, should beauty evermore
Bring with its joy, this subtle, sad unrest.

I heard sweet tones, whose wondrous gladness filled
 My dreams at night, to linger through the day,
 The self same notes combined a different way,
Woke discords that no after music stilled.

Love came to me, should I have bid it go?
 I clasped it close, thrilled with the bliss of life;
 Yet, even here, I found the same sad strife,
The undertone of bitterness and woe.

Then born of love were longings vague and vast,
 Oh, leave us still our love, though all else change;
 Beyond the valley in the land so strange,
Give us once more the dear ones of the past.

No answer came, and faith was blent with doubt,
 Yet since God wills it so it must be best,
 Oh, when this asking heart is hushed to rest,
Will he give joy and leave the sorrow out?

ON THE HEIGHTS

The heights are thine, but sunset's golden gleaming
Bespeaks the daylight's close;
The heights are thine, but not for idle dreaming,
Nor yet for vain repose.

Forever to thee through the echoing distance
Come cries from those below;
Oh, noble soul, send us thy sure assistance,
We, too, would upward go.

Then answered thou in tones which do not falter;
I hear and heed thy cries;
Henceforward shall this mountain be my altar,
My life the sacrifice.

The ever shifting, ever growing beauty
Of cloud, and mist, and sun,
Shall lure my steadfast eyes no more from duty
Until my task is done.

But I will watch and wait with love unending
'Til my brief day shall close,
'Til my shades of night about my soul descending
Shall bring me God's repose.

SHADOWS

Oh, who so poor but moonlight's spell hath bound him
To walk abroad, and with anointed eyes
To gaze upon the dual forms around him,
And see in brooks the fields of Paradise!

To see, within each purest soul abiding,
The tender shadows from the unseen sky,
And feel in conscience' ceaseless care and chiding
The mirrored justice of the Soul Most High.

Night is the great earth-shadow, silent, tender,
Bringing a blessing to the world of men;
Bidding the day its littleness surrender,
Till morning brings its toil and din again.

But there are shadows, too, of thought and feeling,
Within whose influence each soul must dwell,
Potent as when the sick were laid for healing
Where good St. Peter's passing shadow fell.

And now, as then, must fall in bane or blessing
The unseen shadows that men's spirits cast;
For gifts of healing lie in love's possessing
To glorify the present as the past.

Genius! thy works are shadows of the ages,
For which no earthly sun did yield the light;
Historic and prophetic are thy pages,
With sacred truths for those who read aright.

Oh, Shadow World, thou hast some hidden meaning
That these poor eyes are yet too dim to see;
But some day, from thy height and silence leaning,
Whisper the word, unveil the mystery.

BLESSED ARE THEY THAT HAVE NOT
SEEN AND YET HAVE BELIEVED

No human soul at any time
The whole of truth or beauty sees,
But touched by special verities,
God's chosen ones make life sublime.

One gazes on the star-gemmed blue,
Where for long years all eyes have turned,
And to the star-depths are discerned
Through which light's winged arrows flew.

And one through daily sounds doth hear
The harmonies for us too high;
Then since we cannot verify
May we not trust the finer ear?

If some upon each mountain height
Have eyes to see the heavens unfold,
What matter if from gates of gold
The visions slowly reach our sight?

Oh thou, who from the mountain sod
Proclaimed life's grandest verity,
May we not trust who cannot see
Thou art a teacher sent from God?

That lifted o'er the multitude
Our souls to thine thou still wilt draw,
'Til led by love's divinest law
We reach at last the final good.

WAITING

O! slowly each winter-drift passes
From meadows half bleak and half brown,
And long must it be e'er fresh grasses
Look up to a sun looking down.

For first from kind heaven's pure portals
The tears of the April must fall,
E'er rising the buried Immortelles
Respond to the summer's sweet call;

Respond in the garden with blushes
That deepen 'neath ardors of June,
To wither, alas, in the hushes
Of days that must follow too soon.

Of days in whose scorching embraces
E'en earth feels her coldness depart,
And welcomes the fresh baby faces
That lie on her motherly heart.

O summer, I wait for thy glory,
And mingle my hopes with my fears;
I wait for the end of a story
Whose end bringeth gladness or tears.

O PITY HER

Oh pity her and all who keep
The memory of a last caress,
Who strive to rock their griefs to sleep
In cradles of forgetfulness;
Whose wayward thoughts against their will
Return to sweet forbidden themes;
Whose hearts find their best comfort still
In blest but unsubstantial dreams.

Oh pity her, she did believe
In language which made speech seem dumb.
Oh pity her and all who grieve
And watch for those who may not come;
Who love not wisely, but too well,
'Til o'er their hearts they cease to reign,
And long in woe unspeakable
For days that will not come again.

Oh pity her, the living, lost,
Must ever claim her tenderness;
Her soul would scorn the peace that cost
A life of love's forgetfulness.
Yet honor her and all who give,
Not hoping to receive again;
Whose self-renouncing spirits live
The same true lives through joy or pain.

DIVIDED

Our ways in life must lie apart;
I give no wishes breath,
But shrined within my silent heart,
I hold her mine till death.

She walks the world with stately tread,
For music guides her feet,
Nor does she know a soul has bled
At finding her so sweet.

She knows not, and 'tis better so,
For thus she may not miss
One shining tint, or roseate glow,
That lends her life its bliss.

But should her singing change to keys
Where minors wail their woe,
Oh, then upon my bended knees
My love shall overflow.

Then if, perchance, she stoop to take
The gift delayed so long,
Oh, may she find for love's sweet sake
I kept it pure and strong!

ANOTHER TIME

Another time our souls shall keep the height
And scorn the cheap success and shun the shame;
We know the world at last must view aright
The feeble flicker of an unfed flame
Swift passing into night.

Another time we will not quite forget
That courtesy from man to man is due;
He was our foe, yet life is sore beset,
And though the hasty words were deeply true
Their harshness we regret.

Another time shall watchful love surround
The chosen one with jealous tenderness.
Why should we hide the riches that abound,
And with a knowledge we alone possess
Inflict the deeper wound?

Another time! ah, yes, we dare to wait,
Though sudden shock or unforeseen event
May teach our souls the grief that comes too late.
Or careless work may prove our monument,
And thoughtless deeds our fate.

SINCE

Since I life's deepest joy have known
I feel so near to those who smile
And live in other lives the while
I walk grief's shady paths alone.

Since I have known life's greatest grief
I feel the brotherhood of pain;
Nor would I quite my tears restrain
Although they may not bring relief.

Since I have known temptation's hour
I feel so near to those who sin;
Oh subtle enemy within,
I know my weakness and thy power.

Then may I feel for those who fall
A never failing charity,
Since in my own humanity
Are links which bind my soul to all.

A BALLAD OF THE WORLD'S SYMPATHY

Has your youthful bloom met untimely blight
Through a stunning shock from relentless foes ?
Or your hair turned white in a single night ?
Then the world a thought on your fate bestows.
Yet the selfsame world little sorrow shows
For the snow white hair that a long life brings;
For the great world grieves o'er no common woes
Which come in the natural course of things.

Have you lost a lover while hope was bright,
While your cheek combined the lily and rose ?
Have you lost a limb or a life for right ?
Then the world a thought on your fate bestows.
But alas for her who no lover knows,
Or the life when no glamour of romance clings;
For the great world grieves o'er no common woes
Which come in the natural course of things.

Have you fallen low from a dazzling height ?
Have you blindly reeled from the cruelest blows ?
Has wealth taken wings in a sudden flight ?
Then the world a thought on your fate bestows.
But not if your life from its dawn to its close
Has known not the sorrows the poet sings;
For the great world grieves o'er no common woes
Which come in the natural course of things.

ENVOY

Are you tragic or picturesque in your woes ?
Then the world a thought on your fate bestows.
But it yields no pity for sufferings
Which come in the natural course of things.

NOT GENUINE

I had, ah me, a precious stone
Where glowing fires changeful shone,
 As leaping into lambent light
 It wooed the weary wandring sight:
I learned at last in bitterness
That it was all but valueless.

Yet now, as then, its fitful flame
Doth gleam and wander just the same;
 And still its rainbow-tinted dyes
 As radiant flash o'er weary eyes;
But I have learned to dread no more
The loss which seemed too great before.

I had, ah me, a more than friend,
Nor dreamed that love and trust might end.
 Her lightest touch could calm regret,
 Her speech was melody, and yet
Love only lasts where love is due,
And truth alone may find us true.

Yet now, as then, o'er starry eyes
The veiling lashes fall and rise;
 And still in changeful tones I hear
 Familiar music once too dear;
Yet vainly now the words are said,
The friend I dreamed I knew is dead.

AT DUSK

My neighbor's home is near to mine;
So when the day grows dimmer,
I often watch through gloom of pine
A fire-light gleam and glimmer;

Its flicker o'er the pictured walls,
Its bloom on children's faces,
Its wand-like touch whene'er it falls
On dusk or darksome places.

Yet by its light I may not see,
If those within are lonely;
Their inner lives are veiled from me
Who gaze from windows only.

Nor would I strive to read the heart
With eyes that see so blindly;
For He that knoweth all, not part,
Alone can judge us kindly.

Nor can they know their household light,
Steals through my thoughts depressing,
Or that a stranger's lips at night
Have breathed for them a blessing.

NO ROYAL ROAD

How many seek the gladness
That love and friendship lend,
Forgetting to be friendly
While asking for a friend.

How many seek the plaudits
Men yield an honored name,
Nor make their work more worthy
To win the longed-for fame.

How many seek position
And highest tasks to do,
And strive to rule the many
Though faithless to the few.

How many fix their vision
On mountains lost in light,
Yet scorn the weary climbing
That leads them to the height.

And choosing false conditions
How many then complain,
Because life's laws are changeless
And truth and justice reign.

Because as to Mohammed
Life teaches to each one
That all may seek the mountain,
The mountain comes to none.

TRAEUMEREI

I do not sorrow that I dreamed,
 Though dreams must leave a weary pain;
I cannot sorrow, for it seemed
 I held thee to my heart again.

I held thee, and thou didst not speak —
 Too sweet the golden silence fell —
Thy quick breath warm upon my cheek,
 Thy true heart beating — all is well.

Oh! Blissful moment, but too brief,
 Oh, eyes too kind that looked on me,
Why did I wake again to grief?
 Why did I wake so far from thee —

So far from thee? Oh depth of pain,
 Almost thy force has mastered me:
Arise, my soul, thy strength regain;
 Arise more calm, more strong, more free —

More strong in faith, believing yet
 That prayers are more than empty breath;
That hope is wiser than regret;
 That *love* is *life*, and conquers *death*.

A MAN

From highest sources he doth draw
The peace which marks him in the strife;
The beauties of the moral law
Pervade his heart, illumine his life.

The deep and high, the far and near,
His all-embracing thoughts enfold,
While wisdom keeps his insight clear
Within the new to see the old.

Yet sacred feelings in his breast
Respond to joy or suffering;
He giveth with a noble zest
Alike to peasant or to king.

Nor lost to him earth's loveliness;
Its tints, its tones, his being fill;
The touch of beauty's trailing dress
Awakes his nature's reverent thrill.

Oh happy heart, life's morning beams
Still on his noonday pathway shine;
The radiance of early dreams
Still keeps for him the light divine.

BROKEN LINKS

O lives but lately linked with mine,
I'm sad and heavy hearted;
For hands of Fate no more may twine
The strands which now are parted.

From pages of your lives I took
A portion of the story;
Then other hands received the book,
And other hearts the glory.

Yet may you in your happiness
Of love and duty blended,
Send backward one kind thought to bless
The friend whose dreams are ended.

And I will hold it in my heart
To crown each high endeavor,
That thus you may become a part
Of my best self forever.

INDIAN SUMMER

All hazy is the golden atmosphere,
And mingled all the autumn's gloom and glow,
While o'er the waters far beneath and clear
The tranquil shadows come and go.

For far above me, slowly, silently,
Float misty clouds of silv'ry fleece,
Which seem like prayers from souls all purity,
Ascending slowly to the realms of peace.

And though my heart o'er fallen splendor grieves,
My trusting soul knows neither fear nor care;
Alike are love, and law, in falling leaves,
And bursting buds, of spring-time's sunny air.

And in this heart that seemed so old and sear,
A late-found joy, an Indian summer's reign,
Sheds forth its warm and golden atmosphere,
To bring me back to life and love again.

RENUNCIATION

The wailing wind, the beating rain,
The darkness pressing on the pane —
All vainly strive to hide from me
The form I long, yet dread, to see.
And standing in the outer gloom,
I see the firelight's rosy bloom,
And in its molten glory trace
The features of a worshiped face.

The chestnut hair in glossy flow
Half shades the Grecian forehead low,
And in the deep, unfathomed eyes
A tender, dreaming shadow lies.
Oh, trusting soul that looketh through
Those tranquil eyes of evening blue,
Forever 'tween myself and thee
A dark and yawning gulf I see.

Nor can I let thy spirit bless
My soul in its unworthiness,
For better through my loss to be
Forever nearer unto thee!
And live to find in loss my gain,
My happiness in depth of pain,
For choicest blessings ever lies
In all true prayerful sacrifice.

CONSCIOUSNESS

For me the grandeur of the mountain height,
For me the glory of the tranquil sky,
For me the starry spaces filled with light —
All things for me, and yet how small am I!

Yet not so small, since in my conscious thought
I hold the earth's and skies' immensity —
Strange that unnumbered years to them have brought
No force to feel so small a thing as I.

Their unfelt years seem than my moments less,
Their grandeur dwarfed beside a living soul;
Possession lies alone with consciousness;
We feel a part; we prophesy the whole.

Shall life, the greater, yield to death, the less?
Oh mystery, if it can so befall
That souls renounce their crown of consciousness,
While matter reigns dumb victor over all!

REVEALED TO BABES

The careless child that in the sunlight plays
More keenly feels the blessing of the light
Than the wrapt sage whose reason recondite
Measures its speed and separates its ways.

And humble souls, walking in prayerful ways
With childlike trust, perchance may feel the might
Of unseen forces guiding them aright,
Not analyzed, yet blessing all their days.

Though facts of science to the flowers lend
No added beauty to make glad their sight,
And through no laws of sound they comprehend,
They yet are concious of their own delight;
And deeper truths which all our thoughts transcend
Perchance their simple faith may read aright.

THE ONLY LIBERTY

The stars of night illumining distant spaces
Unspoken laws obey,
Nor are they free to seek each other's places
Nor wander from the way.

For if one star its shining path should alter,
Regardless of its sun,
Lo, many stars in heavenly paths might falter
Before the night was done.

For stars, like human lives, are linked forever,
And if one fail or fall,
From its dark fate we may not quite dis sever
The fate which waits on all.

Sea waves that seem to toss in reckless beauty
Obey the changing tide,
And only know the liberty of duty
While stars and waters glide.

Nor can mistaken man in ways forbidden
Find wider liberty,
For every sin doth forge a fetter hidden
Which binds in slavery.

Then keep the law which to thy soul is given,
With changeless constancy;
For still obedience for earth or heaven
Is highest liberty.

CO-WORKERS

What seem opposing forces
May work for a common end,
As in the perfect picture
The light and shadow blend.

We may not say that daytime
Or nighttime is the best,
Since noble work accomplished
Is born of toil and rest.

Perhaps were there no evil
There were no chosen good,
And all things work together
In ways not understood.

Both doubting and believing
The nobler faith may bring,
And giving and receiving
One song of love may sing.

Oh when o'er hearts responsive
Sweep waves of harmony,
Discord, as well as concord,
Informs the melody.

Then life and death we name not
As enemy or friend,
Since in the finished picture
May light and shadow blend.

HER BIRTHDAY

This day to me so much doth mean
What can I say?
Thought banishes the years between,
They pass away.

I stand where to a mother's heart
A babe is pressed;
And in unspoken thanks take part,
One with the rest.

Then strive to follow childish feet
'Til they have crossed
That fateful line, to some most sweet,
Where childhood's lost

In maidenhood. But friend my own,
These dreams to me
Are only sweet since I have known
Reality.

The present still the past doth hold;
The visions bring
As roses in their hearts enfold
All days of spring.

Oh love, in all the years to be
Together or apart,
The deepest music of my heart
Will be my thoughts of thee.

CHRISTMAS DAY

Oh Christmas, dawning, flood the whole world over
With more than morning's light;
Oh day of days, to world-worn hearts discover
Once more life's dearest right;

The right of love to give, what higher blessing
Can earth or heaven know,
Since giving leaves unsought in our possessing
Far more than we bestow.

Oh life of lives, when we would turn to borrow
Strength for our spirit's night,
Teach us that those who wear a crown of sorrow
May win an inward light;

That empty hands may bring the richest giving,
If clasped in brotherhood;
That man's best gift to man is noble living,
If all were understood.

And when from changing strife of things external
Our souls would seek release,
Help us to gain from unseen things eternal
Thine own exceeding peace.

THE SILENT SIDE

The spring has come and earth is glad
With all her old-time gladness;
Yet through it all the heart is sad
With deep, unwonted, sadness.

All outward nature joys to find
Through growth its fit expression;
In higher walks of love and mind
A groan is intercession.

The swollen buds and singing birds
May burst their bonds tomorrow;
But human lives in spoken words
Can never voice their sorrow.

They stand on shores of silent seas,
And while they strive to sound them,
Their spirits faintly catch the breeze
That ever blows around them.

To dear and distant ones they send
A slight or trivial token,
Hopeful that with the gift may blend
Some wealth from the unspoken.

And listening strive to understand,
Through wails of separation,
The music of the Master hand
Whose key-board is creation;

VERSES BY GRACE S. WELLS

Since in these longings fraught with pain
We catch the low vibrations
That draw our souls from earthly plane
To heavenly habitations.

LOVE, THE ARTIST

Shall I bid some artist paint thee ?

Every tint is dear to me ;

But the soul is more than color,

Could he catch its mystery.

Shall I bid a sculptor study

Every line that lends thee grace ?

Warmth and life are lost in marble,

Lost each fleeting change of face.

Shall I call to aid the poet,

He who voices the unheard ?

To the music of thy spirit

He might set the noble word.

But I love thee, dear, so wholly

I must still combine the three ;

Love keeps spirit, warmth, and color ;

He alone can picture thee.

AT THE BEETHOVEN ANNIVERSARY

You stepped before the waiting throng,
And lo, the place was changed to me,
As if I heard all suddenly
In forest aisles the birds' wild songs;

And you a forest flower seemed
Fresh from some vine-enclosed retreat,
So calmly fair, so proudly sweet,
I knew of fame you had not dreamed.

Wild violets were in your hair,
Wild violets lay upon your breast,
A fitting place for them to rest,
They could not miss the forest there.

Oh when your fingers touched the keys,
Your spirit touched each throbbing heart,
For nature so informed your art,
You could not, did not, fail to please.

The audience beneath your sway
Gave the applause which was your due;
I, silent, gave my heart to you,
A gift to keep or cast away.

Then is it strange this forest flower
Which graced your hair brings back to me
That master anniversary
In which I knew life's dearest hour?

A PORTRAIT

Against the background of life's gloom
A star-sweet face I set,
Within whose lilies I forget
The beauty born of bloom.

I do not know that common eyes
Would turn this face to see,
Yet it doth daily bring to me
Some new and sweet surprise.

Some duty done, or noble thought,
Has shaped its every line,
And Love on it with touch divine
Its softer charm hath wrought.

And through it shines a depth, a worth,
That all things glorify,
My eyes behold a finer sky,
I tread a fairer earth.

Oh, all the years that went before
I claim as mine,
As from the grapes of some far shore
One keeps the wine.

Yet not alone for me, dear friend,
These long years through
Thy aim was kept until the end
To beauty grew.

For thou dost bring to every heart
Like melody;
One golden thread runs through each part,
Though changed the key.

Oh melody that words would mar,
Thy meanings shine;
The best we have, the best we are,
True soul, is thine.

INSEPARABLE

Something forbids me live my life alone,
The fate which is not mine I still must share.
Yet partly mine all woes which I have known,
And no unclouded joy I find my own,
While some must meet despair.

Should it be mine on summer seas to sail,
Should tranquil breezes still my vessel bear,
For my heart's ease this could not quite avail,
If still I knew that somewhere ocean's gale
Had brought one ship despair.

If worshipped Love with highest gift should come,
If it were mine a thornless crown to wear,
I would remember what Love brings to some,
Nor quite forget the way it might have come
And brought my life despair.

Should wealth and fame my path through life adorn,
And I no darker ways be called to dare,
I would through others feel the proud world's scorn:
And, lo! a cloud would dim my sunlit morn,
A shadow of despair.

And had my spirit reached the realm of bliss,
To learn that some might never enter there,
Not heaven's gates could bar out woe like this;
But highest joy I would forever miss,
Should one soul meet despair.

FORSAKEN

Just as of old the sunlight's shadowed splendor
Drifts downward dreamily;
Just as of old day ends in moonlight tender,
And brings me thoughts of thee.

With rhythmic cadence, crested waves are bringing
Their treasure to my feet;
I only hear a song too sad for singing,
Sung by a voice too sweet.

Oh love, that song, which voiced a heart forsaken,
That music of despair,
Within my soul its fixed abode has taken
To reign in triumph there.

A subtle poison to each thought 'tis giving,
I feel that one is gone,
And know the while I walk among the living,
The death of love withdrawn.

THE STORY OF A SEED

Into the soil I cast a seed,
An idle hour beguiling;
The robin sang who saw the deed,
And earth and sky were smiling.

Then briefly through my heart-strings swept
The song of Nature's beauty,
Whose strains of tender peace I kept
When called once more to duty.

Beneath the evening's silent dew,
The morning's sunlit splendor,
The tiny seed to beauty grew —
A stately plant, though slender.

No human eye beheld its grace,
Its shadow nook adorning.
Till I the well-remembered place
Slow sought one autumn morning,

The withered leaves beneath my feet
Fair Summer were entombing;
But O, my flower — so strong, so sweet! —
'Twas blooming — blooming — blooming!

Ah! then I thought, for vain applause
Why should we tax each power,
When those who work with Nature's laws
Victorious gain life's flower?

THE REALM OF ART

O mystic realm, lit by the light ideal,
Some subtle change all things have undergone
Which enter here; the harshness is withdrawn
From which we shrink within the world called real.

Not here the pangs of love the spirit shares,
Here passion wins repose in sculptured stone:
Hot quite as sorrow here is sorrow known,
Immortal woe immortal beauty wears.

Upon the pictured face, speechless, not dumb,
We seek the griefs from which in life we turn,
Or in the poet's glowing words that burn,
How dear the heart's transfigured woes become.

Oh, who would spare the minor thread of pain
That gifted ones through gayest music weave?
Or who would lose the joy with which they grieve,
O'er woes which have through art been born again?

O tender realm, thy nights no stars forego;
To every storm some rainbow light is born;
Some dawning promise waits on every morn,
And every sunset wins its afterglow.

TWO PILGRIMS

A stormy sky, a rugged road,
A pilgrim, worn and weather-stained,
With every muscle nerved and strained
To bear along his heavy load.

Another traveler passes by,
A youthful form, a fair young face,
A rider, full of ease and grace,
On whom no heavy burdens lie.

For one short moment side by side
They onward press to reach the height;
But fast descend the shades of night,
And one must walk, while one may ride.

And if the rider first shall gain
The height, and reach the longed-for prize,
O let us not for this despise
The one who struggled on in pain.

For inspiration's help to win
To all alike may not be given;
But those who gain through strife their heaven
Will hear no less God's "Enter in!"

THE MYSTIC THREE

A glory in the golden hours,
A deeper sweetness in the flowers,
And through the fleeting days of spring
A song more sweet than birds may sing;
For fair the stars of night arise
Since love transfigures earth and skies.

A gloom within the golden hours,
A lurking sadness in the flowers,
The song within the heart is still,
The very sunshine seems a chill;
For moons may wane and suns may rise,
But death transfigures earth and skies.

Yet worshiped Love, for thy sweet sake
Gladly the gift of life we take,
And for the thrill thou givest to breath,
We bear the pangs of grief and death;
Yet reconcile, oh days to be,
Life, Love, and Death, the mystic three.

SOCRATES AT THE THRESHOLD

It is with hope, and not with vain repining,
I walk th' appointed way:
Death came to me a cloud with silver lining,
The promise of the day.

One aim my soul has kept, one aspiration,
To lead the long years through:
To know the perfect truth by contemplation,
And to myself be true.

Yet many times has come a guest unbidden,
Oh spirit bound with clay,
Amid thy songs earth's passion music hidden
Revealed the syren's sway.

On rocks of love, and wealth, and vain ambition,
She sang with luring wile;
My eyes were fixed upon a fairer vision,
I could not heed her smile.

But, lo! the sunlight slanteth in its splendor,
Bring me the swift release!
Farewell, my friends, oh tried and true and tender!
Bid useless sorrow cease;

Nor say when I have passed beyond earth's portal
You bury Socrates,
Lest words untrue should stain the soul immortal;
But in the way you please,

VERSES BY GRACE S. WELLS

Dispose of that whose fate can never alter

The spirit freed from clay.

And now the cup with hope that does not falter —

I wait the perfect day.

THE WORLD WELL LOST

Beloved, thy life is crowned with fame,
The world is ringing with thy name;
But thou, forever shrined apart,
Sacred in chambers of the heart,
Wilt weary of the loud acclaim.

Rare jewels flash upon thy hand,
And silks from looms of some far land
In flowing folds about thee fall;
But thou wilt some day turn from all,
And I who wait will understand.

Against the cold delights of fame,
Against the weary world's acclaim,
The simple might of love I place,
And dare to read upon thy face
The shy, sweet thought which is not blame.

Then leaving, losing all for me,
I know thy deeper gain shall be
By no regretful shade o'ercast;
But thou wilt turn in joy at last
From riches which are poverty.

LOSS AND GAIN

We watch the freshness from the world withdrawn
Before Life's noonday heat:
But in her day she only knew the dawn —
The morning glad and sweet.

With spirits burdened, and with hearts oppressed,
We wear the weight of years:
It was not hers to watch the fading west
Through eyes bedimmed with tears.

Knowing that loss must follow every gain,
All dear things we possess:
But from Life's cup she was not called to drain
The after bitterness.

In facts of fixed and fatal narrowness
Our dreams we realize:
She only knew Life's promise limitless —
A crescent in her skies.

We know Love's grief: she knew the ecstasy
A poet-soul may win,
Nor saw the radiance of the fair To Be
Fade in the Might Have Been.

MATER DOLOROSA

Against the background of Life's gloom
The years a star-sweet face have set,
Within whose lilies we forget
The beauty born of bloom.

Not Grecian lines, not youthful gifts,
Alone this tender face adorn;
Its beauty of the soul is born,
And strengthens and uplifts.

Some duty done, some noble thought,
Has shaped each spirit-chiseled line;
For here with touch and trace divine
Have Love and Sorrow wrought.

O tender type of woman's worth
Which doth all ages glorify,
Through thee we see a finer sky,
And tread a fairer earth!

For still Life's crowning aureole,
O dearest of the pictured saints!
The halo which high living paints
In colors of the soul;

Which, like the light on Stephen's face,
Is signet of the birth divine,
Revealing through the outward sign
The spirit's inward grace.

LOVE'S MESSENGERS

Beloved, my own, I will not strive to say it,
Since words to match my thoughts too feebly come
Yet in some way I would to thee convey it,
That thou mightst feel these deeps which seem so dumb.

O for a little while my soul would borrow
The magic power of Genius to reveal,
From master minds whose deepest love and sorrow
Have found a voice for us who speechless feel.

Then let mine be that noblest poet's singing
Where rhythmic throbs the heart of all mankind;
His smitten soul is with my sorrow ringing —
His words are those I vainly strove to find.

And if alone, there comes to thee unbidden,
The master strain of some deep symphony,
O vibrate to the tender meaning hidden —
It is my soul's unspoken love for thee.

LIFE

Oh life so brief, oh life so long,
 So brief for love, so long for hate,
 So brief to seal an endless fate,
So long to walk, nor seal it wrong

So long for strife, and jar, and fret,
 So short for visions unfulfilled,
 For all we hoped and dreamed and willed,
But oh, so long for vain regret.

Oh life so great, oh life so small,
 So great in all the dim to be,
 So small in clear reality,
So wondrous small if this were all.

Oh life so small, oh life so great,
 Thy germ alone as yet we see,
 For flowers that bloom eternally
A lifetime is not long to wait.

ON THE BEACH

We walked together on the sands,
We watched the white sails come and go,
We talked of near, and distant lands,
Of what we did, and did not know.

We sat upon the cliffs at night,
We saw the moon rise from the sea,
And in its shifting, shimmering light
I strove to read her thought of me.

The spell of night and music lent
Her beauty's charm a pensive grace,
Or was it that some sweet thought sent
Love's tender shadow o'er her face.

I might not know, yet somehow came,
A gleam of hope across my fears,
Oh, Love! I said, no more the same
My love can be through future years.

If friendship ends may love begin,
Oh give me love or give me hate,
But if I lose or if I win
My soul is set to know my fate.

A moment's pause, a pain intense,
When deep, true eyes were raised to me,
Oh, happy ending of suspense,
Oh dream, become reality.

IN THE DARK

The day had died a happy death,
The evening sky was still aflush,
When we two walked with bated breath,
Within our hearts the twilight's hush

The mingled scent of many a bloom
Rose softly on the silent air,
The grand old forest lent its gloom,
The distant sea moaned its despair.

My heart was full, the years to come
Were dim with dread uncertainty;
My foolish lips with love were dumb,
My spirit answered to the sea.

But Nature speaks, if lips are still,
And when my soul found strength at last
To breathe in broken words my will,
My doubts and fears forever passed.

Her firm white hand reached out to mine,
I clasped it close yet tenderly,
And through night's darkness felt the sign
That life's great joy had come to me.

OLD AND NEW

In the soft twilight a maiden is seated,
Watching the clouds with the sunset aflame —
Watching the glory so often repeated
Over and over, yet never the same.

Touched like the clouds is her being with glory;
Thrills all her soul at a voice or a name.
New as the Garden of Eden the story
Ever repeated, yet never the same.

In the soft twilight a woman is seated,
Watching the clouds with the sunset aflame —
Watching the glory so often repeated
Over and over, yet never the same.

Dark grow the clouds as her hopes of the morrow;
Sick is her soul of its weakness and shame.
Old as the sorrow of Eve is her sorrow,
Ever repeated, yet never the same.

Ah! thou wise Solomon, chief of the sages,
Nothing perchance, is new under the sun;
Still it may be, though repeated for ages,
Old to the many, yet new to the one.

UNREST

The outer world keeps all its ancient splendor,
Fair Nature wears the smiles she ever wore,
The sky and waves are touched by light as tender;
But where the calm content that asked no more?

The world of Art keeps tint and tone alluring;
But how may I the old-time zeal restore?
O where the varnished charm I thought enduring,
And where the calm content that asked no more?

The world of Science, where great truths are hiding,
Still yields to earnest search its deeper lore;
The world of Faith still keeps its hopes abiding;
But where the calm content that asked no more?

O through the wide domain of Life's endeavor
All things remain as they have been before;
But I have lost — alas! I fear forever —
The tranquil heart content to ask no more.

IN AUTUMN DAYS

Fair June is queen of all the year
 And wears the crown;
Yet someway when the fall is here
And leaves of mingled gold and brown
 Come drifting down.
The past I do not then regret
 Or quite forget.

The summer robe of earth was fair,
 Yet by and by
I shall rejoice in branches bare
Outlined against the Autumn sky,
 Nor heave one sigh
Proclaiming that a poet grieves
 O'er fallen leaves.

Dame Nature well may change her dress
 Once in a while;
For, changing with her loveliness,
Most fitting seems each change of style,
 And fair her smile,
E'en when she walks in matron's gown
 Of sober brown.

Not on the face of youth alone
 My eyes would gaze;
For I another spell have known
Than that which crowns an infant's days

With winsome ways,
And sometimes turn where scar and line
Have left their sign.

Life's harvests may not come to youth —
Beauties must fall
Before we garner up the truth
That comes hard won and late to all;
Yet for no thrall
Would I resign the fruit of years,
Though seen through tears.

BARRIERS

It is not distances divide.
Though stormy waves moan angrily,
If that were all upon the sea,
My sails were set to come to thee,
In spite of wind, in scorn of tide.

It is not bolts, it is not bars;
Love laughs at locksmiths merrily.
The nameless something that I feel,
More chill than space, more strong than steel,
Lifts thee beyond remotest stars.

Nor is it shadows of thy will
Which darken o'er me gloomily;
But thou, star-like, doth dwell apart,
In realms more fair than one poor heart,
Whose spaces I may never fill.

As one whose glance may hardly see
The valley yawning dizzily,
Thou walk'st the highest by sunlight kissed;
While I below, in blinding mist,
In thought alone may follow thee.

LOVE'S LOGIC

As one in the summer-time's glory,
O'er the death of one loved flower grieves,
Nor remembers the year's changeless story
Still is written on numberless leaves;

So we mourn for one hope which has vanished,
So we grieve o'er one trust that is dead;
Though we know for the guest we have banished
We might welcome a thousand instead.

Still the light of the heavens is deathless,
But our sky of one star is bereft,
And that star which is fallen and faithless,
Seems more dear than all stars which are left.

Still the tribute sad memories render
To our idols, though fallen, must cling,
For the heart that has throned a pretender,
May but slowly prepare for its king.

Yet the past which is sadly forsaken,
And the feelings most constant may prove,
That the heart in its object mistaken,
Has been changelessly loyal to love.

And we know that the great are forgiving,
And that kings with a grace from above,
Freely pardon mistakes in our living,
If our souls have been loyal to love.

ONE WORLD AT ONCE

One world at once! you say with smile and jest;
Its joys are many, and its labors wide:
Why can you not with these be satisfied?
Why wander ever on a fruitless quest?
Ah, friend! thy care-free heart has never guessed
The secret that the mourner's soul doth hide.
No loved one has been taken from your side:
No little child, that slumbered on your breast,
Eludes the arms which still in deepest sleep,
Through tender habits, clasp but emptiness.
But O, for those crushed by stern fate's behest,
But madness lies within the anguish deep
Whose only solace this world may possess,
Since in the grave no living heart may rest.

One world at once! O, no! This grief of mine,
And love and nature do the vaunt deny.
While looking downward from a tender sky,
God's myriad worlds upon my pathway shine,
Their influence I may not all divine,
Nor may I know the hidden reason why
So many worlds are seen by mortal eye;
But that for each their forces all combine,
I think e'en calm-eyed Science may not doubt.
We walk below, but with the sky above;
Our souls are conscious of the heights sublime;
In vain Earth tries to shut the heavens out;
The hearts that suffer, and the hearts that love,
Accept no creed of one world at a time.

THE KING

One comes to her in kingly garb and guise;
She hears the wary world his praises sing;
And, list'ning shyly with a pleased surprise,
She owns the hope that now at last her eyes
Behold the King.

Yet still a doubt her maiden spirit grieves:
Love's perfect trust his presence fails to bring;
And, in each tender romance that she weaves,
Why is it that she never quite believes
He is the King?

Another comes, unnoticed and alone:
About his life no royal glammers cling;
The world has never branded him her own;
Yet to one heart the certain truth is known
That he is King.

Now can her soul the shafts of doubt defy;
His voice from truth has caught the royal ring;
No substitute can shine when he is by;
Disguises fail, and life is grand and high —
For he is King.

COMPENSATION

Upon our too accustomed eyes
Unheeded beauties fall:
Gone is the glory and surprise
Which once our hearts could thrall
In blessings free to all.

But those tried souls who leave behind
The cell or sick-room's gloom,
Within our common world may find,
After a living tomb
An endless life and bloom.

And thus, though life's best joys to some
Seem birthrights free as air —
To whose gay hearts have never come
The accents of despair,
The chains that some must wear.

We yet must feel the joy supreme
May come to those alone
Who, waking from an evil dream
Of want and anguish known,
At last have found their own.

And, if Heaven holds one deeper bliss
That angel-hearts may know,
It well may be for those who miss,
Or for high cause forego,
The best in life below.

A DREAM

Last night a bridge of dreams was thrown
Across the gulf, our lives between
The weary years which intervene
Were for a little while unknown.

As in the summers long ago,
The moonlight nights beyond recall,
I seemed to see the soft light fall
Upon the river's tranquil flow.

Again upon the fragrant air
Familiar garden-scents arose;
As in the far-off daylight's close,
When we, together wandered there.

Once more, while seated at my feet,
I read in star-depths of your eyes,
The wordless love which bade you rise
And draw me to your heart, my sweet.

Oh, close, so close, each pulse's beat
I felt within your warm embrace;
I felt love's kisses on my face
While sorrow passed with silent feet.

But lo, I woke! through shadowed ways
The sighing South-wind softly grieved,
As if the voice of one bereaved
Were singing songs of other days.

VERSES BY GRACE S. WELLS

Night's never-failing mystery,
The sleeping world did still enfold;
The crescent, passionless and cold
Sailed slow through the heaven's tranquil sea.

Yet, when the night had passed away,
The crescent faded from my sight
The dream which glorified my night
Still blessed and sweetened all my day.

BECAUSE

Because the lark and the nightingale
 So sweetly sing,
Shall other songsters to the vale
 No music bring?

Because the finer ear may trace
 Rich harmonies,
Shall ballads sung with tender grace
 Our ears displease?

Because the artist-eye delights
 In beauty more,
Shall we despise the simple sights
 Around our door?

Because some thinker's grim lips close
 O'er words we miss,
Shall we deny that there are those
 More sweet to kiss?

Because the feet of some may press
 The mountain-sod,
Shall we in valleys feel the less
 Our walk with God?

FOR LOVE'S SAKE

I read the praises of some poet lover
In sad yet sweet refrain,
And wish I too might thus my love discover —
I too relieve my pain.

But I can live it only — never say it:
Forever unexpressed,
O might some silent, secret force convey it,
A blessing, to thy breast!

I note the bloom on tender, girlish faces
And wish I too were fair;
But on this brow no wandering breeze displaces
A tress of golden hair.

I trace the names upon Fame's flattering pages;
I do not care for Fame,
Yet for thy sake I would that all the ages
Might learn to know my name.

O might my life in some way touch the living,
My prayers be more than breath;
Then should I lose the whole of self in giving —
I would not deem it death.

CHIARO-OSCURO

Two in the twilight are watching the embers.
Speech is forgotten and laughter is dumb,
One looking back to days she remembers,
One looking forward to days yet to come.

Glowing the embers illumine both faces,
Clearly revealing, on backgrounds of gloom,
One whose wan visage wears sorrow's deep traces,
One whose beauty need borrow no bloom:

Dreamers unlike, yet alike in their dreaming,
Love paints the picture revealed to each sight;
Hope and remembrance though different in seeming,
Darken its shadow or deepen its light.

Twilight to each brings a distant one nearest,
Each sees a loved one no other may see,
Each dreams a dream to her spirit the dearest,
Of joys which have been or of joys which may be.

Sweet is the hour for love's meditation,
Yet is its sunlight subdued with the night,
Sad is the hour for love's desolation,
Yet are its shadows illumined by light.

Whether Love's sun may be rising or setting,
Love is a twilight whose light is not clear,
Lights of remembrance are dimmed by regretting,
Pleasures of hoping are shadowed by fear.

VERSES BY GRACE S. WELLS

Sun without shadow or love without sorrow
Never revealed to a mortal may be,
Yet in the dawn of Love's perfect to-morrow
Sorrow may vanish and shadow may flee.

BITTER-SWEET

Give me, oh sleep, one tender dream!
 Upon life's weariness bestow,
Through hours of night, a joy supreme
 My daytimes may not know.

Give me, oh life, with grief and wrong,
 One boon and solace for my woe;
Let sorrow sing a deathless song
 That joy may never know.

Give me, oh love, when age subdues
 Thy light, life's crowining afterglow,
And touch my tears with rainbow hues
 That smiles may never know.

Give me, oh death, the joy supreme,
 Or griefs that teach my soul to grow,
Or that deep rest without a dream
 That life may never know.

A PIECE OF DRIFTWOOD

I lay beneath a group of motley trees,
When lo! the forest kings broke forth in speech;
With gestures that no trainer's art could teach,
Their graceful arms swayed in the rising breeze.

"Why do you sigh, my tender little friend?"
An aged Oak asked of a slender Pine.
"I sigh," she said, "so many dreams are mine,
And I would know what future fate may send."

"What are your dreams, and what your heart's desire?"
Then asked the Oak, striving to bend his form.
"On distant seas I long to brave the storm,"
Replied the Pine; "but oh, to light a fire —

"That is the fear that haunts me day and night."
"That's what you would do best," put in the Thorn.
But the Oak said, "No good our souls should scorn;
Meanwhile receive all that you can of light."

Then from the sea where sails did swiftly glide,
A voice most musical did softly say;
"I am a driftwood piece, from far away;
I have no dreams — I'm floating with the tide;

"Yet, oh! if I might yet some use fulfil!
To no high place my heart would dare aspire;
Most gladly would I light some cottage fire,
Or bring to humblest home a sash or sill."

Then spoke a stunted ill-formed Hickory:

“My place, I know, is some cathedral grand;
But driftwood, floating from a foreign land,
Does well to speak with due humility.”

Then said the Oak: “The place we fill at length,
Ambition wins not, nor humility;
But inborn gift, and that capacity
Which serves some use of beauty, grace, or strength.”

Then all was still. The Oak bowed low his head;
The Driftwood was too far to make reply:
The only sound again the Pine tree’s sigh;
The Forest King his last kind word had said.

A year passed by. Once more I sought the place,
But all had found their fate on land or seas;
Yet once again I saw the Driftwood-piece
Above the arch that formed a temple’s grace.

THE FRIEND OF MANY YEARS

As a tired sailor, tempest-tossed,
Grateful at last the harbor nears.
Forgetful of the cargo lost
As land and home appears,
From voyage vain, from bootless quest
I come while Hope the pilot steers
To thee, the harbor of my rest,
O, friend of many years!

As one who hears loved melodies
Re-echo youth's departed years,
His heart suffused with memories,
His eyes with tender tears;
Familiar, though forgotten long,
A sweeter strain my spirit hears,
O, thou, my heart's remembered song,
Dear friend of many years!

As one whose day was overcast,
Beholds a change whose glory cheers,
When through the rifted clouds at last,
The twilight star appears;
So I, although love's sun has died,
Behold, where life's horizon clears,
One star which crowns my eventide —
O, friend of many years!

Or, like a diver of the deep,
Who gathers ocean's treasured tears,
Yet finds but one that he may keep,
Changeless through changing years!
I win, though late, from life's rough sea,
One pearl alone repaying fears;
That treasure is my trust in thee,
O, friend of many years!

AT PEACE

I watch the distant mountain heights,
Half veiled from view;
The mist-wreaths, touched with changing lights,
Are faintly blue.

I hear the sound of dawning day;
I note the thrill
Each tiny breeze sends o'er the bay
Where ships lie still.

And in my heart, half-veiled from sight,
Great thoughts uprise;
Like mountains lost in mist and light,
They touch the skies.

Like music from a distance brought,
Wordless yet sweet,
They fill that mystic realm where thought
And feeling meet.

All worldly discord sinks to rest
In glad release;
I lean my head on Nature's breast,
My soul at peace.

SPACE AND SPIRIT

Through Love's unfathomed mystery,
While far apart, soul spoke to soul;
O'er wastes of land and leagues of sea
Thought reached its goal.

The far was near, the near was far —
Space and its limits were forgot;
For love had burst the prison-bar,
And time was not.

But now, when hand has clasped with hand,
And words beyond recall are said,
They learn at last to understand
That Love is dead:

And know, the while with even breath
They walk Life's pathway side by side,
That barriers more strong than death
Their souls divide.

A WOMAN

The poet's laurel wreath she doth not wear,
Since in her busy life she seldom writes
The poems that she lives: yet on the heights
With native sympathy her soul doth share
The poet's keen delights.

She neither seeks nor gains the world's acclaims,
Though rarest gifts are hers of mind and face;
More proud is she to fill her simple place,
And wear what seems to her the dearest names
That womanhood can grace.

Her joy it is to guard her loved from pain,
To take from them the burdens hard to bear;
To give her days, her nights, her life, to care
For those who, loving her, yet entertain
Their angel unaware.

And more than artist's patience she doth give
To tasks of motherhood, since not alone
High dreams are clothed in color, form or tone;
Wrought from the lives that human beings live
Is highest beauty known.

On such as she the world may not bestow
Its vain applause; far from all vulgar strife
She dwells content, if through her hidden life
Her loved the meaning of the name shall know
Of mother and of wife.

DISCORDS

My rose within her shining hair —

His ring upon her finger.

Alas! she is so wondrous fair!

My rose within her shining hair,

In guilty hope, in mad despair,

In love, in hate I linger,

While beauty fades within her hair,

And flashes on her finger.

My rose within her shining hair —

His ring upon her finger.

The ballroom tapers gleam and glare —

The rose still nestles in her hair,

Ah Heaven! that she is lying there,

While strangers stare and linger:

My rose within her shining hair —

His ring upon her finger.

HER STORY

For years she longed as other women long,
To feel love's arms about her, strong to shield,
Her weakness, e'en as others sought the strong;
But lo! she loved too well his life to wrong,
And loving did not yield.

As other women weep alone, she wept
That she had naught to give that he might take;
Yet, if she wakened when the great world slept,
The hours of darkness still her secret kept,
Who suffered for love's sake.

And he dreamed naught that she had given all,
Who still forbade both eyes and lips to speak.
Nor learned how she had deemed her gifts too small,
From her whose maiden pride could hold in thrall,
The color in her cheek.

Yet when at last there came an end to strife,
And she was called as others are to die;
She still rejoiced who had not been a wife,
To know her love had never marred the life,
It might not glorify.

THE THOUGHT OF THEE

“The thought of thee is home.”—*Whittier's "Sea Dream."*

I walk a stranger in strange lands,
Life's dearest dream still unfulfilled,
And yet for me fair fancies build
A house not made with hands:

A place, beloved, where thou dost reign,
Wherein, as by home's fireside,
I put the world and grief aside,
And trust and peace regain.

Since ever when my longings call
Thou com'st to this trysting place,
Again I see thy maiden grace,
Thy smile, thy gestures, all.

And tender words my spirit hears
Which gives love's dearest right to me,
The right to hope and memory
Through all life's lonely years.

And if I may not quite forget
The darker lives I daily see,
The lily of thy purity
Is on their background set.

VERSES BY GRACE S. WELLS

Thus though a wanderer I roam,
Love yields to me one place of rest,
One refuge for an aching breast,
The thought of thee is home.

RECALLED

To-day, when looking on thy face,
I had a dream of youth;
Life seemed no longer commonplace,
But full of noble truth.

As earth might feel returning spring,
Its buds and leaves restore,
I felt my spirit blossoming
With old beliefs once more.

And once more in my heart I heard
A song of other times,
As if a winter-banished bird
Came back from summer climes.

And all was life — there was no death —
Within this world of bloom;
The lily of a living faith
Grew close beside the tomb.

For as the sunbeams from above
The birds and blossoms bring,
The magic of a mighty love
Recalls life's vanished spring.

THE COSTLIEST GIFT

"I have no gift," said I to Fate,
 "No gift for one I hold most dear;
Love long delayed has come too late,
Since I with empty hands await
 The specter age — alas too near."

"Changeless am I," stern Fate replied,
 "Relentless as the passing years;
And yet all gifts are not denied:
Thy woman's heart, thy woman's pride,
 May give its silence and its tears."

Oh costliest gift, all else were less,
 Yet meet are tears for empty hands
Which hold no gift of happiness,
And for a love that may not bless
 Silence which makes no vain demands.

LOST CHILD

RONDO

This modern miss, as misses may,
Attends alone the matinee;
Her father speculates in wheat
And, whether honest or a cheat,
The markets own his skilful sway;
His daughter, pretty as a fay,
Gains many glances at the play
Where men with breath clove-scented greet

 This modern miss.

Yet though not one of whom you say
"Of such the Kingdom" — in her way
She is a marvel most complete
From soft banged hair to dainty feet:
Yet lo, a child is lost to-day,

 This modern miss.

THE VERDICT

Could I fulfil the poet's tender mission
And voice life's keenest joy or wordless woe,
I then could calmly wait for recognition,
Secure the world would know.

The harp of life though mute for feeble fingers,
Doth answer well the gifted and the strong;
Lo, at their touch the world in wonder lingers
To hear the deathless song.

If in my breast there glowed the sacred fire
That seers and prophets knew in days of old,
I would not doubt that faith could still inspire
Or deem the world was cold.

For I believe the world full justice renders
To every gift or grace we truly bring,
And know the scorn which greets the throne's pretenders,
Is reverence for the king.

Yet there are limits set from life's beginning
Beyond whose boundary we may not press;
Then let our spirits strive the less for winning
And more for worthiness.

A PLAIN WOMAN'S REVERIE

I wish that all women might wear
The gifts which make some women fair;
To know oneself plain and a woman
For a creature no higher than human
Is a lot at the least hard to bear.

Since all would be fair to the eyes
Of the beings their spirits most prize,
And feel that their virtue and truth
Wears the garb of a beautiful youth,
Instead of the saddest disguise.

Still the casket of lead may contain
The gem that a noble would gain;
Though the thoughtless the fact may forget.
While we who are wiser regret
That our saint has a face which is plain.

Yet the plain woman's lover must be
One of those who are gifted to see
Not only the surface of things.
And of such are life's nobles and kings,
And this thought is a solace to me.

I ASK FOR NOUGHT

I ask for nought, if wishes lie
Within my heart no suppliant I;
I only crave what comes unsought;
That gift which man has never bought,
Hopeless I do not strive to buy.

I ask for nought.

I ask for nought, though thus I lose
The greatest good my heart would choose—
The joy thy love my life had bought.
One truth my woman's pride has taught.
I may accept, I may refuse:

I ask for nought.

I ask for nought, yet if a prayer
Escape my spirit unaware
With love's unfathomed forces fraught,
Some law divine may sway thy thought:
To chain thy will I would not dare:

I ask for nought.

AN HEIRLOOM

Fair the bride before the altar:

 All that love can win from life,
Glorified her maiden pathway,
 Lies before her as a wife.

Fine each garment, as befitting —

 Gem and lace at throat and wrist,
But the veil that dims her blushes —
 Fine as cobwebs, soft as mist —

Is an heirloom rare as priceless,

 Deftly wrought by unknown hand —
Wrought, perchance, for royal wearer
 In a distant time and land;

Or for highest dignitary

 Of the ancient Church of Rome,
Since Faith holds no gift too precious —
 Even life, or love, or home.

Strange a fabric fine and fragile

 Should resist the shafts of time,
While so much that seemed enduring
 Perished in that far-off clime.

Strange a life should leave behind it

 Naught for curious mind to trace,
Save a romance fancy woven,
 And an ancient bit of lace.

VERSES BY GRACE S. WELLS

Still the water-streets of Venice
Mirror back the mystic moon;
Still the group of fairy islands
Rise above the pale lagoon.

But the hand whose cunning fingers
Learned their skill from love or faith,
In a century departed
Found the rest that comes to death.

Yet today, with living beauty,
One unknown has shared our thought,
Since all win some sweet remembrance
Who a perfect work have wrought.

A VALENTINE

When passing sunbeams fall
Upon a dungeon wall,
Shall one of light and liberty denied,
Within a living tomb,
Dream not of all the bloom
That crowns the summer sunlit land outside ?

Thus when thy smiles on me,
Loved one, rest graciously,
Shall my dark heart forget the gift denied;
Nor dream in wild unrest,
While prisoned in my breast,
Of how thy love my life had glorified ?

From such a soul as thine,
On such a life as mine,
Too bright the sunlight of thy glances fall.
If doomed to live in night
I cannot bear their light;
Then give me less, beloved, or give me all!

In vain are kindly deeds
To satisfy love's needs,
Such are but winter roses in love's lore;
And longing visions bring
Of summer or of spring,
For love, dear lady, ever asks for more!

NON NOBIS SOLUM

On every wind that blows
There comes to thee, sweet Rose,
Some tender message born of earth or air:
Yet, loved of every one,
And darling of the Sun,
What right hast thou to be supremely fair?

Yet lift thy perfect face,
Droop not in royal grace,
For I, O Rose beloved, can well believe
That the sweet joy is thine
To bloom by right divine,
And that to give again thou dost receive.

O tender Queen of Night,
Regal in robes of light,
After the garish day what peace is thine?
Thy might and mystery
Do rule the restless sea;
But, peerless one, what right hast thou to shine?

Yet mist-wreaths float apace,
Veil not the moon's fair face;
Though rich the gifts she winneth from the Sun,
Unlike the world of men,
She takes to give again —
Her light impartial shares with every one.

O Human Life, if Fate
Hath deemed no gift too great
To mark thy lot from that of other men,
Think not thou hast a right
To all Life's bloom and light,
But humbly take, and freely give again.

THE WIDER FATE

Though our choice is the summer and roses,
Yet a flower more humble may bring
Revelations that nature discloses
In the dear resurrections of spring.

Though our choice is the sunlight transcendent
Yet we find it passes from sight;
That the moon and the stars are resplendent,
With a glory belonging to night.

Though our choice is not friends, but a lover,
Yet we find, when denied the dear thrall,
That the mind like a bee is a rover,
And may gather the honey from all.

Although fate of our choice has bereft us,
Yet our lives are not wholly unblest;
There is something we find that is left us,
And it may be that something is best.

Yet at times, with the heart's deep unreason,
We still sigh for life's rose and its sun,
Though it may to our judgment be treason,
Still the many are less than the one.

For not yet are we thankful for losses,
Since not yet are our spirits so great
That our souls would be lifted by crosses
To a wider and godlier fate.

THE DIFFERENCE

Only a few more notes,
Only a finer tone,
And lo! the world bows down
Before a singer's throne.

Only the same old thoughts
Clothed with a sweeter sound,
And lo! a poet's brow
With laurel leaves is crowned.

Only a finer ear,
Only a swifter skill,
And lo! the artist plays
On human hearts at will.

Only a tint or line,
Only a subtler grace,
And lo! the world goes mad
Over a woman's face.

Yet, though so slight the cause
For which men call us great,
This shade the more or less
May fix an earthly fate.

For few may wield the power
Whose spells uplift or thrill;
The barrier, fixed yet fine,
We may not cross at will.

THROUGH TIME AND SPACE

How many springs have passed with coy delays,
How many summers earth has glorified,
How many autumns waned whose pomp and pride
Set vine-wreathed hills and forest fires ablaze!
How many years, with slowly numbered days,
In winding sheets of drifted snow, have died
Since that one day when, with love's prayer denied,
Fate set our feet to walk in separate ways!
Yet memory lives, though years and hopes are dead,
And still is space o'er spirit powerless.
Life's music silenced, still has power to bless,
As in the thought may dwell the poem read,
And still my soul wins glory from afar,
As tranquil deeps reflect a distant star.

APART

O friend most dear, to own your sway
Is joy too deep for sorrow,
Though I am but your yesterday,
While you are my to-morrow.

Though I am one who sees afar
The sun in might ascending,
While you but see a paling star
Whose time to shine is ending:

Yet while dread spaces intervene,
They may not quite dis sever:
Though far apart, a link unseen
Joins sun and star forever.

OUGHT

O soul-compelling word, of Conscience born,
Worthy art thou o'er highest lives to reign;
And, if thy whiteness win some earthly stain,
Yet, weighed to right, thou biddest souls to scorn
All seeming ill and loss, and only mourn
The noble purpose which by sin is slain.
Ah! thou dost deem a whole world poorest gain
If for its sake one soul should be foresworn.
And much I doubt that in this mortal life
One e'er may rise to heights beyond thy need,
Or fall so low that thou wilt be unheard.
Then not till Grace and Nature cease their strife
To blend in souls from earthly conflict freed,
Can we thy use forego, O noble word!

SONNET

Sometimes the Poet's spell is lost on me;
The sweet, true words lose power to please or teach;
And void to me is Music's tender speech;
Nor have I ears to hear or eyes to see,
Or any heart for beauty's mystery.
But O sad days! though Beauty fail to reach
The deadened soul, some faith you seem to teach
In Life's unfelt, eternal harmony.
O when our sleeping souls forget the night
In the auspicious dawn that yet shall come,
The Universe will be no longer dumb,
But flooded o'er with new and glorious light;
Then shall we say in ancient words come true,
Behold for us the Heavens and Earth are new!

“YOU ARE MY ALL THE WORLD”

You are my all the world; no praise or blame
From lips less loved can move my fixed heart.
You are my all the world: none else impart
The deathless woe to shame, the joy to fame.

You are my all the world: I throw all care
Of other voices in this depth profound.
You are my all the world: life's utmost bound
I reach through you, my hope and my despair.

You are my all the world: what you have said,
Or felt, or thought, my sum of good or ill.
O deeper life, you so each purpose fill,
“That all the world beside, methinks, are dead.”

WITH A ROSE

O rosebud whose closed heart did pine
For self-expression some sweet sign,
Until thy longing, like a prayer,
In fragrance rose upon the air.
Bear to my love more subtle speech
Than I with words may hope to reach.

O tell her of the hidden life,
The wordless love, the endless strife,
And breathe in language half-divine
The poem in thy heart and mine,
Proclaiming with thy latest breath
The silent love more strong than death.

QUESTIONS

Sometime, somewhere, oh soul oppressed,
Wilt thou forget in Heaven's rest
Earth's weariness, so hard to bear,
Wilt thou recall no past despair?
No pang of problems, dark, unguessed?
Or will e'en tragedies attest,
Transfigured by an insight blessed,
The prescence of a Father's care,
Sometime, somewhere?

Or wilt thou cease from bootless quest,
Thy body laid on Nature's breast,
Her round of countless change to share,
And thou, oblivious, unaware,
Forget life's secret unconfessed,
Sometime, somewhere?

THE SOUL'S NEEDS

We need a living God whose force divine
Forever floods our souls with purest light,
And in his perfect goodness, changeless might,
We need a faith that nought can undermine.
Oh, should the sun in heaven forget to shine,
Earth were less dark without its radiance bright
Than is the soul when God is lost to sight,
Than is the heart without the light divine.
Our weakness finds the shocks of life too strong
If faith can feel no force that still abides
To calm our joys, to conquer all alarms,
To aid the deadly combat with the wrong.
Oh changeless One, whatever change betides
We need to feel the everlasting arms.

NEW YEAR'S DAY

Too many errors blot the single sheet
Where for a year our careless hands have wrought.
Then is it not a wise and happy thought
That as the weeks pass by with flying feet
They bring, as New Year's gifts, the chance to greet
With hope renewed the aims that came to naught ?
The deeper skill by sad experience taught
Which wrings from failure a success more sweet ?
Oh if within some other life sublime,
Where there shall be no sorrow and no tears,
No thrill of passion, and no throb of pain,
We may not cling to limits set by time,
Here we must prize the changing days and years,
The hopeful page unsullied by a stain.

VALUES

The acorn is a little thing,
 Yet great in possibility;
 So in its circle small we see
The glory of the forest king;
 Yet of its after life bereft
 How small the value that were left.

And thus with man; the lasting soul
 Alone can make his life sublime;
 It is eternity in time
Which gives its glory to the whole;
 But of immortal life bereft
 How small the value that were left.

LOVE'S PRIVILEGE

Oh chilling sense of failure to attain,
As heavy mists obscure the morning sun
So do you dim the golden dreams of love,
Until the blackness of the dread *I am*
O'ercasts the sweet *I would be* with its gloom.
Yet hast thou ever dwelt with truest love,
And even Portia, fair and wise and young,
Still sighed to be a thousand times more fair,
Still wished herself ten thousand times more rich.
Yet I have sometimes thought if all might reach
The heights they have so longed for, and attain
The fair perfection known alone in dreams,
That in thus gaining they would deeply lose
Love's sweetest joy and highest privilege;
The tender joy of bearing with the loved,
The privilege of souls forgiving wrong.

DIVINATION

Across the deep my wearied soul was calling.
Why did I turn to thee ?
Thy glance was cold as Arctic moonlight falling
Upon a frozen sea.

Yet not unhopeful and unrecognizing
My spirit called thy name,
Since pure, intense, from hidden depths arising
I saw the living flame.

I felt its glow my weary soul investing,
In faith I made my quest;
And now I gaze in starlight eyes, suggesting
A world of perfect rest.

SONNET

Oh poet brows no laurel leaves may crown,
Oh loyal souls that never get your due,
Oh crystal thoughts that live when those who drew
Them from life's depths are dead to fair renown,
Are there no smiles beneath life's seeming frown?
Are there no harmonies with accents true
Whose subtile tones, though all too faint and few,
Earth's bitter voices have not power to drown?
Beyond the sunless day and starless night,
Is there no presence that we fail to see?
Can we not trust the faith outreaching sight?
Oh poet soul, my heart would ask of thee
Are fading bays on fading brows more bright
Than truths time-crowned by immortality?

“THE ETERNAL NOW”

Sometimes I think if we had eyes to see
The beauties manifold around us here,
We would not need to sigh for fairer sphere,
But calmly wait the glory yet to be.
Sometimes I think the varied harmony
Around us now, if we had ears to hear,
Would tremble into melodies so clear
Our souls would thrill in grateful ecstasy.
Sometimes I feel if all that love were known
Which lies like treasures hidden from the sight,
How joy would deepen, burdens seem more light!
Oh, were the wealth of this world but our own,
Might we not walk with tranquil heart and brow,
Content and blessed in the “eternal now?”

COULD WE KNOW ALL

Could we know all, we might no longer dare
To judge so harshly even those who wear
The scars of sin alike on soul and face;
But Pity then, with tear-wet eyes, might trace
The wicked skill of circumstance to snare;
And Love, with new and tender insight, share
The heritage of woe that some must bear;
And Justice wed to Mercy, win new grace,

Could we know all.

Ah! seldom then the pharisaic prayer
Would pass our lips: in lives become aware
Of fate's dread forces, this could find no place;
But Charity would all mankind embrace,
And bitter judgments crown no life's despair,

Could we know all.

NATURE'S WAY

The deep old sea beneath the sunlight smiles,
And sweetest sings amid its rock-bound isles,
Nor does it deign to mark with special frown
The fated spot where bravest ship went down —
For it is Nature's way, on land or waves,
To smile the same above the place of graves.

And Nature, too, or part of it called pride,
Bids human lives their deepest sorrows hide,
And shames the feeble soul that makes one moan
O'er buried hopes, save when with One alone:
Then blame not those who strive with saddest wile
To hide their broken hearts beneath a smile.

MOTHS

Oh, foolish moth, symbolic of that soul
Whose fierce desire reason cannot tame,
I watch thy folly and the fatal flame,
Thy mad careering, death the certain goal:
For one small part I see thee yield the whole.
Yet I incline to pity more than blame,
Since through an impulse wearing love's dear name
I too have known the loss of calm control,
I too have felt it folly to be wise,
Though reason now is victor in the strife
Oh, sweet insanity! Oh, brief delight!
One ray I fear from those beloved eyes
Would still relight that flame more dear than life,
And all my vaunted wisdom put to flight!

TWOFOLD

I saw, one day, in unfamiliar guise,
A friend my folly fancied that I knew:
It almost seemed another soul looked through
The windows of the long familiar eyes.
A glory I had failed to recognize
Within that moment opened to my view,
As I have seen the calm eternal blue
When breaking clouds reveal the upper skies.
And now I know I never knew before
That friend whose face transfigured fills my heart;
Whose fairer self was thus revealed to me.
Ah, twofold life, that blindness I deplore
Which veiled from me thy soul's sublimer part;
For now too late, perchance, I learn to see.

ATTAR OF ROSES

A TRIOLET

We may keep through the winter-time
The scent of the vanished roses,
And the thoughts of their sunny clime
We may keep through the Winter-time
And so in the poet's rhyme,
Which the perfume of life discloses,
We may keep through the Winter-time
The scent of the vanished roses.

LIFE'S ANSWER

The pledge of love is also pledge of pain:
Throughout life's years no light alliance this;
Still sacrifice must mingle with the bliss,
And in its crown the piercing thorns remain.
Yet only thus its lustre wins no stain,
For toil and tears both dignify the kiss,
And from this joy should we the sorrow miss,
Believe me, life would rather lose than gain.
Within each soul that loves, behold the prayer,
"Give me some way to prove my worthiness;
Set me some task this mighty love to prove,"
And life makes answer, "all things thou mayst dare,
And all things give." I ask for nothing less
From those whose souls are great enough to love.

COMPANIONS

A TRIOLET

My door I had opened wide,
For Love was the guest expected.
With a heart full of tender pride,
My door I had opened wide,
Unknowing that Grief at Love's side
Would enter, a guest undetected.
My door I had opened wide,
For Love was the guest expected.

A ROSE IN JUNE

A rose in June! naught is more sweet;
Yet when chill winds defiance beat
Upon the pane, and firelight glows,
A rarer gift the winter knows —
A rose which in some safe retreat
Has bade defiance to defeat,
And gained its sun in spite of sleet:
Than this, a lesser triumph shows

A rose in June.

Ah thus my life, when charms more fleet
No longer may the senses cheat,
That beauty of the soul disclose
Which blooms through age, a winter rose
With whose rare charm can scarce compete

A rose in June.

IMPRISONED

Since I have been imprisoned now so long,
My cell and chains a different aspect wear;
I know indeed the outer world is fair,
That 'neath blue skies there floats the wild bird's song;
But would I mingle with the surging throng,
Their triumphs small, their large defeats to share?
Ah, no, my coward heart could never dare
To measure forces with life's endless wrong,
For I have lost the power of the free,
Nor may I now be what I might have been.
And yet the good of neither fate I doubt,
Renouncing freedom for security,
I can rejoice that bars which close me in
Are strong enough to shut the dread world out.

PATTI'S FAREWELL TO VIENNA

Her witching tones in wondrous beauty died,
And left each listener bound beneath their spell;
Proud hearts were touched, forgetting all their pride,
And deathlike silence on the audience fell.
Then rarest flowers were scattered at her feet,
With costly gifts of gold and flashing gem,
But to her fervent soul, I think, more sweet
Than laurel wreath or glittering diadem,
Came the rich bounty of a people's heart;
For when they rose, as one, upon their feet,
Her eyes shone out through tears that rarely start —
The woman, as the artist, was complete,
And felt, beneath each plaudit's noisy din,
The "touch of nature making all hearts kin."

TWO PILGRIMS

A stormy sky, a rugged road;
A pilgrim, worn and weather-stained,
With every muscle nerved and strained
To bear along his heavy load:

Another traveller passes by;
A youthful form, a fair young face;
A rider, full of ease and grace,
On whom no heavy burdens lie:

For one short moment side by side
They onward press to reach the height;
But fast descend the shades of night,
And one must walk, while one may ride.

And if the rider first shall gain
The height, and reached the longed-for prize,
Oh, let us not for this despise
The one who struggled on in pain.

For inspiration's help to win,
To all alike may not be given;
But those who gain through strife their heaven,
Will hear no less God's "enter in."

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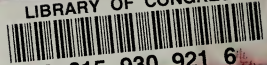
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